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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7893
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2324
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1744
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5801
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2174
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2007

In Today's Papers

Detention of Kurdish DTP Members Continues

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Ferhan Turk, the head of the pro-Kurdish party DTP in Mardin province, was detained for "praising a criminal" after referring to the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan as "sayin," which means, roughly, "esteemed" in English. The DTP leader Ahmet Turk recently received a six-month prison sentence for using the same word to refer to Ocalan. In the western port city of Izmir, 13 DTP members were detained yesterday under the same charge.

Meanwhile, the Turkish anti-terrorism supreme board, convening under Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul on Tuesday, discussed the efforts to fight against terrorism and the measures to be taken before the upcoming Nevruz celebrations in southeast Turkey.

Center-Right Parties' "Election Alliance," Agar on Southeast Question

All papers point to ongoing efforts to form an election alliance between center-right parties in Turkey, reporting former Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz met with Mehmet Agar, leader of the centre-right True Path Party (DYP). Agar told the press he would meet with all who have the knowledge and experience in Turkish politics, stressing, however, that the "venue" of any merger should be DYP. Yilmaz favors unity among center-right parties, supported by former president Suleyman Demirel as well as veteran figures from DYP and the Motherland Party (ANAP) according to papers. ANAP leader Erkan Mumcu, however, said his party was not interested in uniting with other parties.

Papers also report Agar as saying top Turkish officials' contradicting statements on Iraq caused concern among the nation. Responding to CHP leader Baykal's criticism about Agar's earlier statements with regard to the southeast question, the DYP leader said, "Contrary to Baykal's charge, I'm not trying to give away

Diyarbakir, but I am trying to take Mosul."

Ankara Doesn't Want Missile Shield

Radikal, Cumhuriyet: Turkey does not share the NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's proposal that the US

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proposed missile defense program should cover southern Europe as well as eastern Europe, including Turkey. Responding to a question on this issue yesterday, Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul was quoted as saying that "We are not involved in this project. We use our own national resources and our own tenders to meet our air defense needs."

US Initiative on Armenian Resolution

All papers report that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates sent a joint letter to the House leaders underlining serious difficulties that passage of an Armenian genocide draft resolution would cause, describing how Turkish-US relations would be damaged and US interests would be hurt.

Meanwhile, Milliyet, Sabah and others report that in an interview with Reuters, Turkish Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Mehmet Dulger said that if Armenian resolution is issued by the US Congress, then Turkey may introduce restrictions to the US use of Incirlik Air Base. Dulger added that the resolution would seriously damage Turkish-US relations and that the Turkish parliament would define the issue as a "hostile act."

Editorial Commentary on Possible Turkish Intervention in Northern Iraq

Cuneyt Ulsever observes in the mainstream daily Hurriyet: "Defining Turkey's Iraq policy is a difficult task. Turkey, on one hand, expresses respect for the territorial integrity of Iraq as well as its constitution. On the other hand, however, Turkey also expresses

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its intent to conduct a cross border operation into northern Iraq. The contradiction is not limited to the government. The main Turkish opposition party proudly stood against permission for American troops to pass through Turkey during the March 1 [2003] parliamentary talks, yet the same opposition is now talking about sending Turkish troops into Northern Iraq. Another opposition party, DYP, used to talk about paving the way for PKK members to enter into politics. The very same DYP is now talking about expanding Turkey toward Mosul. It seems the Turkish opposition is sacrificing Iraq and the Kurdish issue to the rising tide of nationalism."

Fikret Bila comments in the mainstream daily Milliyet: "Turkey's possible military intervention into Northern Iraq has become a platform for a duel of words between the US and Turkey. First of all, there is a difference in terminology. 'Military intervention' is a broader concept, while an 'operation' is narrow and targeted. The most recent statement on this came from the Turkish military when the Land Forces Commander talked about taking measures against the terrorist net in Northern Iraq if there is a military need. This statement clearly indicates that in an operation shall be considered through the military perspective and not for political purposes. In response to statements of this nature, the US generally comes up with an answer expressing opposition to a military operation in Northern Iraq. Tom Casey for instance made a similar statement a few days ago, and interestingly enough he underlined the US position as a strong commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity. This is exactly the reflection of Turkey's Iraq policy from the very beginning. It is unrealistic to imply that a military operation by Turkey aims at dividing Iraq. It should have been very clear by now that Turkey is opposed to a division of Iraq -- even more than the US is. What Turkey means is a limited military operation in the fight against terrorism. For some reason, the US administration spokesmen either do not understand it, or do not want to understand it that way."

TV Highlights

NTV (6 A.M.)

Domestic News

- An Izmir prosecutor has demanded a three-year prison sentence for Professor Atilla Yayla who was accused of insulting Ataturk in a speech at an AKP meeting in Izmir in November.
- A report of Egitim-Sen labor union shows only 43.5 percent of Turkish youths aged 15-19 were attending school while the related figure for EU countries is 86.4 percent.
- On March 19, a Turkish delegation will inspect the Israeli excavation work near the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.
- Turkey's trade with France reached a record 9.4 billion Euro in 2006 despite Armenian genocide tensions.

International News

- Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki traveled to the Sunni insurgent stronghold of Ramadi on Tuesday to meet with tribal leaders.
- UNHCR has called on the Turkish authorities to refrain from deportation of Iraqi refugees, and on all governments in the region to keep their borders open for Iraqis fleeing persecution.
- Bosnia's top Muslim and Croat officials have expressed support for the Muslims' request for self-rule in Srebrenica, a move opposed by the Serb Republic, which runs the town.
- An Iranian official said his government is working to get a US

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visa for President Ahmadinejad to address the UN general assembly.

- Palestinian journalists held a protest outside the BBC offices in Gaza city calling for the release of kidnapped journalist Alan Johnston.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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